

Memorandum on Improving Hate Crimes Reporting

September 13, 2000

Memorandum for the Attorney General

Subject: Improving Hate Crimes Reporting

Unfortunately, each year our country experiences a number of hate crimes. We have all heard about the heinous incidents such as the dragging death of James Byrd, Jr., in Jasper, Texas, in June 1998. In October of that same year, Mathew Shepard, a gay college student, died after being beaten and tied to a fence. In July 1999, Benjamin Smith went on a racially motivated shooting spree in Illinois and Indiana. At the end of this rampage fueled by hate, Ricky Byrdson, an African American who was a former basketball coach at Northwestern University, and Won-Joon Yoon, a Korean graduate student at Indiana University, were killed, and eight others were wounded. In August 1999, Joseph Iletto, an Asian American and U.S. postal worker, died at the hands of a gunman in Los Angeles. This same gunman also injured five persons, including three children, at a Jewish community center. Finally, this year there were two rampages in Pennsylvania in which several people of various ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds were killed or injured. These crimes affect the entire Nation, the communities in which they occur, and the victims and their families in ways fundamentally different from other crimes. People are targeted simply because of who they are—whether it is because of their race, religion, color, sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

During my Administration, we have worked hard to fight hate crimes. I established the National Church Arson Task Force in June 1996 to oversee the investigation and prosecution of arson at houses of worship around the country. I held the first-ever White House Conference on Hate Crimes in November 1997. At the conference, I announced that the Department of Justice would establish Hate Crimes Working Groups in the U.S. Attorneys' districts across the country. These working groups, essentially Federal-State-local partnerships, typically include representation from the U.S.

Attorney's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), State and local law enforcement and prosecutors' offices, educators, and community groups. The groups work to ensure close coordination on hate crimes investigations and prosecutions among responsible law enforcement agencies; promote training of police, investigators, and prosecutors in identifying and dealing with hate crimes; encourage victims to report hate crimes; and educate the public about the harm they cause. In April of this year, I held a strategy session with some representatives of these Hate Crimes Working Groups at which law enforcement officials—at the Federal, State, and local levels—reported that they coordinate closely on hate crimes investigations and prosecutions.

In 1998, the last year for which FBI figures are available, 7,755 hate crimes were reported—nearly one hate crime every hour of every day. Of these hate crimes reported, 56 percent were motivated by race, 18 percent by religion, and 16 percent by sexual orientation. However, there was certainly an under-reporting of hate crimes.

Today, I announced a new report, "Improving the Quality and Accuracy of Bias Crime Statistics Nationally: An Assessment of the First Ten Years of Bias Crime Data Collection," which was funded by the Department of Justice. This report noted that over 10,000 city, county, and State law enforcement agencies now participate in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Hate Crime Data Collection Program. Although 83 percent of participating agencies reported that no hate crimes had occurred in their jurisdiction during the previous year, follow-up surveys with line officers showed that 31 percent of those agencies had investigated one or more incidents of hate crimes. These data indicate a disconnect between what line officers believe are hate crimes and what is reported to the FBI. Extrapolating from this data, the report estimates that between 5,000 and 6,000 additional agencies may have encountered hate crimes that were not reported to the national program. In addition, the report noted that 85 percent of law enforcement officers responding to a survey believed that hate-motivated crimes are

more serious than similar crimes that are not motivated by bias.

Based on the results of this report, I hereby direct the Department of Justice to work with State and local law enforcement agencies, as well as relevant law enforcement organizations, to come up with a plan to improve hate crimes reporting, within 120 days. I understand that the Department already plans to meet with representatives of State and local law enforcement organizations later this month. In addition to this meeting, the Department should consider in its plan whether various actions, such as the following, would improve hate crimes reporting:

- Pilot programs in jurisdictions where law enforcement agencies reported zero incidents of hate crimes;
- A study to analyze the role that juvenile offenders play in the number of hate crimes committed each year;
- Training sessions by Federal law enforcement on identifying and reporting hate crimes; and
- Activities by the U.S. Attorney Hate Crimes Working Groups to work with community groups and local law enforcement to improve hate crimes reporting in their areas, including helping to bring more victims forward to the police.

In carrying out these activities, I know that you will continue your leadership on fighting and preventing hate crimes in order to make this country a safer place for all Americans.

William J. Clinton

Interview With John Harris of the Washington Post

August 8, 2000

Perspectives on the Final Year

Mr. Harris. Have these guys told you what I'm up to? I'll give you the quick version.

The President. Yes, give me the quick version.

Mr. Harris. It's a piece about year 8 of the Presidency. It's not a legacy piece, looking back at the 8 years. It's a piece about this year and sort of what you're doing on

the policy front, on the political front, on the personal front.

The historic pattern in, you know, basically since World War II has not been last years of Presidencies. Most people have sort of slunk to the finish line, if they made it at all. And it seems to me that you are defying that pattern, and the China vote showed that you have continued policy relevance. I think there's a lot of interest in what you're doing politically for Democrats, particularly for the First Lady.

And I think there's a lot of interest in how you're doing personally, after—you know, by any definition the ordeal of '98, '99, sort of how do you come back and have, by any sort of objective measure, this very energetic final year?

So those three dimensions are all things that I'm interested in.

One thing I'm curious about is to what extent—how self-conscious you were at the end of last year, at the start of this year, that, look, we've got a very limited window, and was there sort of a methodical approach to organizing the limited amount of time you had left, or was it just sort of, you know, a race to the finish line? In other words, was there an acute sense of the window closing?

The President. Well, let me back up a minute and say I have—I was aware, I suppose, at some level, from the moment I got here, although I didn't have much time to think about it, that generally, Presidencies seem to wind down. And normally, it starts sometime not just in the last year but in the year before that. And occasionally, something pops up that happens that's good, but normally there is kind of a decline.

I didn't think that that was necessary but that it was something you had to have a definite strategy to avoid, because it's just not right for the country. You know, they pay us to show up for 4 years, and there's always a lot of business to be done.

And even in the political context of an election and even, clearly, the change of administration—as I always remind all my colleagues in the Congress, on both sides—no matter how much we get done, there will still be plenty of things that won't be resolved, over which there will be genuine differences, and therefore, you can have a